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INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION IN THE PEACEFUL USES OF OUTER SPACE

Letter dated 6 November 1997 from the Permanent Representative of Uruguay to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

On behalf of the pro tempore secretariat of the Third Space Conference of the Americas, for which Uruguay is currently responsible, I have the honour to transmit herewith a report on the secretariat's activities. I should be grateful if it could be distributed as an official document of the General Assembly, under agenda item 85.

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ANNEX

Report on the activities of the pro tempore secretariat of the Third Space Conference of the Americas during 1997

I. ACTIVITIES CARRIED OUT TO DATE (FIRST YEAR OF WORK)

During its first year of work, the pro tempore secretariat focused on two basic aspects:

A. The need to make the relevant national bodies aware of the secretariat's work, the importance of the Space Conferences and the many practical applications of space technology. Since there has been little development of space technology in Uruguay and there are no specialized bodies in this field, such outreach work was essential.

B. At the international level, the need to alter the impression that the Conference secretariats have limited scope for action, using practical examples to show how the Eastern Republic of Uruguay, through its Ministry of Foreign Affairs, has given the secretariat an important role. In other words, create the international confidence and credibility that are essential if the secretariat is to carry out the work that it has begun.

On this basis, two types of action were planned:

1. Action to secure the necessary support for the implementation of some of the projects approved by the committees and the plenary of the Third Space Conference of the Americas;

2. Other action to publicize space-related issues within the region.

1. Projects

1.1 Since the pro tempore secretariat lacked information on most of the projects, it had to start by seeking out such information. Accordingly, in January and February 1997 successive additional requests for information were sent out, in questionnaire form, in an attempt to obtain systematized information as to what projects exist, who is in charge of them, what national support they are receiving, how far advanced they are, and so on. These requests were also forwarded by the pro tempore secretariat, by means of notes verbales, to the embassies in Uruguay of countries where projects are being implemented. In some cases, where circumstances permitted, the national coordinators of each committee conducted personal interviews; in others, follow-up was conducted by telephone.

1.2 Unfortunately, despite these efforts, the response was disappointing: in some cases, the information in question has still not been received. Nevertheless, there are some projects about which enough is known to take formal steps to secure the necessary support.

1.3 It emerged from the information received that for most projects the basic problem is lack of funding, including funding from the countries in which those projects are being carried out.

1.4 Without wishing to question the action taken by the committees during the Conference, the secretariat began to wonder just how much scientific rigour some of them had shown. The funding situation also made it necessary to gauge more accurately how receptive the international community might be to the projects concerned. In response to an offer from the European Space Agency (ESA), the secretariat submitted a set of projects for Agency experts to examine and report upon.

1.5 In some specific cases, international organizations or cooperation agencies with offices in Uruguay were contacted with a view to submitting projects to them for support and/or funding.

1.6 Such action will obviously have to be stepped up so that, by the beginning of 1998, the secretariat will be able to devote itself exclusively to raising funds for projects and to increasing the involvement of participating domestic and foreign government bodies.

2. Action to publicize space applications and the pro tempore secretariat's work

2.1 In January 1997, the secretariat visited Mr. Willem Wamsteker and Ms. Valerie Hood of the European Space Agency (who travelled there for the occasion) at the Villafranca space station in Spain and explained to them what it intended to do in each area of work. The secretariat also met with Mr. Alvaro Giménez, Director of Spain's Instituto Nacional de Técnica Aerospacial (INTA), and Mr. Juan San Nicolás, Spain's Director of Civil Defence, with whom it planned the holding of a regional seminar on natural disaster detection and mitigation in Montevideo.

2.2 The secretariat began a series of national and regional contacts related to the organization of the seminar.

2.3 Numerous working meetings were held with Uruguayan bodies, particularly the senior officials of such bodies, to explain the secretariat's work and explore possible areas of interest for the holding of scientific events.

2.4 On 28 and 29 April, a seminar on "Practical applications of space technology to natural disaster detection and mitigation and enhanced management of such resources" was held in cooperation with the Ibero-American Association of Civil Defence and Protection Agencies. It was attended by 20 international experts, delegations from eight countries in the region, plus Spain, and more than 150 participants. Uruguay was represented by senior officials from five Government ministries and by various related bodies. In parallel with the seminar, a forum to discuss issues of common interest was organized for the various national civil defence bodies that attended. The foreign experts who attended had a special programme arranged for them: they visited their Uruguayan counterparts and, in some cases, gave other lectures in higher education centres.

2.5 Work began on the Space Conference Web page.

2.6 Mr. Mauricio Fea visited the secretariat in Montevideo and various areas of cooperation between the secretariat and the European Space Agency were explored

in detail, particularly ESA support for the Web page of the pro tempore secretariat of the Third Space Conference of the Americas.

2.7 In July, various working meetings were held in Madrid with:

A. Spain's Department of Civil Defence, to work on preparations for the Ibero-American Congress to be held in September, at which the secretariat was assigned the role of moderator of the meeting on satellite applications;

B. The Instituto Nacional de Técnica Aerospacial;

C. The European Space Agency;

D. AENA.

2.8 On 22 and 23 August, Mr. Sergio Camacho was present in Montevideo and not only participated in an intensive exchange of ideas with the pro tempore secretariat, but also gave two lectures on UNISPACE III: one in the auditorium of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, which was attended by over 80 national experts, and the other to the officer corps of the Military School of Aeronautics.

2.9 On the same occasion and in the presence of Mr. Camacho, an agreement was signed on scientific cooperation between the pro tempore secretariat and the Aeronautical and Space Information and Education Centre of Uruguay (CIDA-E), which is under the authority of the Department of Civil Aviation.

2.10 On 26 August, since Mr. Vittorio Canuto was in Montevideo, a lecture on "The Journey to Mars" was held in the Ministry's auditorium and attended by over 100 people. The next day, Mr. Canuto met with fifth- and sixth-year students at a local public school for a question-and-answer session on the subject of space.

2.11 When the first Ibero-American Congress on Disaster Management, organized by the Ibero-American Association of Civil Defence and Protection Agencies and Spain's Department of Civil Defence, was held in Madrid from 22 to 26 September, the pro tempore secretariat of the Third Space Conference of the Americas was appointed moderator of the meeting on satellite applications, together with Mr. Julio Melián of the Instituto Nacional de Técnica Aerospacial. This event provided an opportunity to publicize the secretariat's various activities internationally. The secretariat was also assigned the task of coordinating a working group on the various applications of space technology to disaster management.

2.12 On 13 and 14 October, a seminar was held on the practical applications of space technology to meteorology. It involved international experts from the European Organization for the Exploitation of Meteorological Satellites (EUMETSAT), the World Meteorological Organization and countries of the region such as Argentina, Brazil and Paraguay, in addition to over 90 participants. It covered areas for practical applications such as agriculture, forestry and air and sea navigation.

2.13 A working meeting with the senior authorities of the National Commission for Space Activities (CONAE) of Argentina and INTA of Spain was held in Buenos

Aires on 30 October, for the purpose of exploring joint cooperation activities with the pro tempore secretariat.

2.14 On 30 and 31 October, working meetings of the pro tempore secretariat were held with the participation of Mr. Mauricio Fea of the European Space Agency. The participants reviewed the activities carried out and identified new activities to be undertaken in cooperation between the two institutions.

2.15 From 17 to 19 November, an international seminar will be held in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs auditorium on communications, navigation and surveillance and air traffic management (CNS/ATM) satellite navigation systems, at which more than 30 international experts will give presentations and 150 people will participate. Technology providers (United States Federal Aviation Administration (FAA), International Maritime Satellite Organization (INMARSAT), Airlines Worldwide Telecommunications and Information Services (SITA), Alenia, INDRA) will be represented at the seminar, as will users and various business associations (International Air Transport Association (IATA), AITAL) and airlines. The International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) will be represented by its Lima-based Deputy Regional Director.

2.16 In December, a lecture will be given by Mr. Folco.

Most of these activities involved the valuable support and constant involvement of the United Nations Office for Outer Space Affairs.

Notes verbales submitted by the pro tempore secretariat of the Third Space Conference of the Americas to the diplomatic missions of member States accredited in Uruguay:

- Appointment of members of the pro tempore secretariat;
- Seminar on natural disaster detection and mitigation;
- Lectures by Mr. Camacho and Mr. Canuto;
- Interest in participating in an international support group;
- Introduction of the secretariat's Web page and offer of space therein;
- Preview of events to be held in the second half of the year;
- Invitation to the seminar on meteorology;
- Invitation to the CNS/ATM seminar;
- Forthcoming scientific activities;
- Renewed invitation to States engaging in space activities to participate more actively in the Space Conferences and in the activities of the pro tempore secretariat.

II. ACTIVITIES PLANNED

1. Projects

Once the report of the ESA experts is received, contacts for fund-raising purposes will be intensified. Activities will include: providing incentives to encourage the national institutions to which the researchers are attached to participate in projects; interlinking related projects; and providing information on projects to private companies, international cooperation agencies and other entities.

2. Publicity activities already planned for 1998:

- Publication of a report on the activities carried out in 1997;
- Educational events:
  - Primary school: School painting contest on the theme "Uruguayan children look at space", with the participation of teachers;
  - Secondary school: Essay contest on space-related topics, particularly practical applications;
  - Universidad del Trabajo:
  - Legal professionals: In conjunction with the Faculty of Law of the University of the Republic, the Aeronautical and Space Information and Education Centre of Uruguay (CIDA-E), the Uruguayan Bar Association and the International Space University (ISU), a pan-American monograph contest will be held on legal aspects of space activities;
- The launching of each of these activities will involve a formal presentation, which will be attended by the highest authorities of each branch of education, teachers, training professionals and pupils;
- The foregoing activities will conclude jointly in the fourth quarter of the year, concomitantly with the opening of an educational exhibit for the general public, with the participation of the main actors involved in the development of space technology;
- As in 1997, the space technology experts who come to Uruguay will give lectures;
- In addition to the foregoing activities, at least three regional seminars will be held on topics to be determined, as a follow-up to the ones already held.

Considerations to be borne in mind by the members of the support group which could be of interest to the pro tempore secretariat:

- Need for international contacts, once the relevant presentation has been made. Objectives: funding for projects, participation in seminars and events, involving interested parties in the secretariat's publicity activities;

- Potential sponsors for the pro tempore secretariat's Web page, including private companies;

- Participation of support group members as Web page columnists, through the contribution of a monthly article;

- Development of closer ties with the United States National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) and the Canadian Space Agency (CSA).